

Gethok Tular, Traditional Knowledge Preservation Method: Opportunities and Challenges

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With the ever-increasing amount of information readily available nowadays, it is indeed empirical for mankind to preserve knowledge for future generation. The emergence of technology both posits opportunities and challenges on how knowledge is being preserve. Known as *Gethok Tular* or *word-of-mouth (WOM)*, it is a conventional marketing method of communication using traditional or offline marketing technique of getting people to talk about products and services positively (Alire, 2007). Looping “trusted advisers” as credible marketing ambassadors, *Gethok Tular* allows the validity of information to be tested several times through dissemination of information gained through someone else’s experiences. A literature study in nature, this undertaking aims to describe the challenges and opportunities of *Gethok Tular* or *word-of-mouth (WOM)* as a traditional method of knowledge preservation. Data were derived from analysis of different literatures available and deriving general principles from specific observations. Similar with “lots of copies keep stuff safe” (LOCKSS) preservation method or principle, this study intends to explore the possibilities of *Gethok Tular* as a knowledge preservation method especially in the digital era. While it is true that privatization or censoring information cannot be ignored, rigorous examination of information received thru *Gethok Tular* should also be considered to avoid distortion and further destruction of valuable knowledge and information.

Keywords: *Gethok Tular*; word-of-mouth; traditional communication; knowledge preservation

1. INTRODUCTION

Information ownership in this digital era is very crucial. Transformed into an asset that is no less valuable than money and gold, the value of information has evolved for centuries. And as futurist Alvin Toffler once posits, “whoever controls information, will rule the world”, this expression has gradually begun to realize.

The emergence of various tools and media for exchanging information allows free-flowing information thru various channels. This allows the creation and production of new knowledge and information. Media and information technology have indeed made the exchange and production of information more effective and efficient. This phenomenon also marks the industrial revolution 4.0 or even 5.0 which is usually associated with the massive interference of information technology in every human activity. People tend to make decision quickly with the help of some software. Such technology was developed so rapidly that information transactions are carried out by machines instead of humans. These non-natural intelligences that resembles human thinking is popularly known as *artificial intelligence*.

Another advancement that emerges is the technology which allows users to read data on a scale that cannot be done using conventional methods. Through this technology everything, that is abstract provides a clearer view of thing. People tend to be surprised by the advertisements of products or services that interests them. This is not a coincidence, but an analysis of a technology of human behaviour with the help of different machines that can communicate fast and precise information. These circumstances provide realization how



machines became more effective than human beings. Face-to-face communication has been considered ancient and ineffective with the emergence of technology.

Traditional information transaction patterns have some drawbacks such as the limited reach of information distribution. However, from the historical point of view, Indonesia, which is a well-known multicultural country, is the foundation of cultural development, which is more often done using conventional methods. For instance, there are products that are not promoted through media and technology but are known to the public through the "*Gethok Tular*" or "*word-of-mouth*" method, a communication pattern of face-to-face conversation that increasingly make a product widely known (Harjanto and Mulyana 2008).

Through *Gethok Tular*, a piece of information has become very popular and known. Thus, this traditional communication strategy can also extend the life of an information. That is, the more often the information is being talked about, the information will last longer. The key to preservation of knowledge is the willingness to share information. In accordance with the concept of knowledge management, the more often the knowledge is shared, the more opportunities were opened to develop that knowledge.

Gethok Tular or *word-of-mouth* (WOM) is a conventional method of preservation of knowledge which will not take place if there are parties who break the chain of information distribution. In addition, people will find it difficult to develop that information if there are parties who deliberately keep information they know on their own or privatized the information. Privatization further means keeping the information on its own or not sharing it through *Gethok Tular* or other means. Given the explanation above, this paper aims to describe one of the functions of *Gethok Tular* or *word-of-mouth* (WOM) as a method of preservation of traditional knowledge and its challenges.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 *Gethok Tular*

Gethok Tular or *word-of-mouth* (WOM) is a conventional marketing communication method that is still widely used, especially in this digital era. Originally done face-to-face, *Gethok Tular* is still done through social media. The success of social media for networking and marketing has been widely studied, even in pop culture. Indeed, *Gethok Tular* has transformed into a digital word-of-mouth.

Digital *Gethok Tular* is one of the marketing communication strategies in the digital era (Nasrullah 2017). Proven as an excellence strategic communication model, *Gethok Tular* lies in its ability to touch the deepest human element in the process of persuasion (Fadillah 2015). The ability to persuade, which is to make other people to talk about or share the information they get publicly. For instance, an information that is considered to be very private will then become a hot topic which can be openly discussed because the issue went viral on social media platforms. This phenomenon proves that *Gethok Tular* is still present but using the digital mode of information.

While it is true that *Gethok Tular* or *word-of-mouth* (WOM) is considered a marketing communication, it can also be considered as a method of preserving a knowledge. The success of *word-of-mouth* in making information widespread is a form of preservation of knowledge. *Gethok Tular* can also be compared with LOCKSS (*Lots of Copies Keep Stuff Safe*), a digital information source preservation strategy, which means that the more information is duplicated, the more secure it will be (Reich and Rosenthal 2010). Given the same principle of LOCKSS, the more people know this information, the longer the information lasts or preserved.

LOCKSS and *Gethok Tular* cannot be equated in their entirety. LOCKSS is very dependent on technological assistance, so the presuppositions can be accurate or at least

reduce the value of the original source of information. *Gethok Tular*, as previously discussed, is very much dependent on the ability of individuals to transfer and receive information. The extent of the knowledge of the sender and receiver of information can also influence the success and failure of the information transfer process. There are also several other factors that may affect the success of transmitting information, such as educational background, language barriers, cultural differences, and other issues.

Gethok Tular will only be successful if it is understood as the process of multiplying information. Unlike the physical information that can be duplicated using hardware and or software, the information that is abstract or unstructured is duplicated by transferring the information to the broadest possible extent, especially to people who initially did not know the information. Unlike LOCKSS, the process of transferring information through *Gethok Tular* or *word-of-mouth (WOM)* requires clarification in the form of *ask back*. This process is carried out to ensure that the information transferred is successful.

The communication process is said to be effective if the purpose of communication can be achieved. The purpose of communication is for other people (communicants) to listen, understand, agree, act and finally give feedback. Effective communication aims to make the communicant understand the message conveyed by the communicator and the communicant provides feedback in accordance with the message (Prabowo 2019). The mismatch of feedback given by the communicant means that there is a miscommunication problem in the communication process.

Misinformation due to imperfect information communication processes between the sender and recipient of information cannot be ignored. Simply understood as a medium for disseminating information, *Gethok Tular* became a challenge depending on how the information is being interpreted. If there is only one chain of information dissemination from the sluggish spread of information, then it will certainly be very difficult to return information back to its path. The worse impact is the spread of false news or inaccurate information as the initial information spoken by the communicator.

The emergence of internet technology makes the dissemination of information take place quickly and precisely without being limited by space and time. In fact, the internet does not always have positive implications, but can also have negative impacts in the context of information sharing. Technology in this case is a tool that facilitates the exchange of information, but on the other hand technology can also be used by parties who are not responsible for spreading false information.

Widespread hoaxes show that the usefulness of the media is very dependent on its users. Media and information literacy is needed in this regard so that *Gethok Tular* or *word-of-mouth (WOM)* which was originally intended to preserve the information does not turn into a destroyer of information. Media information literacy refers to "important competencies (knowledge, skills and attitudes) that enable people to engage with the media and other information providers effectively, and develop critical thinking and lifelong learning skills for socializing and active societies " (UNESCO 2019). In addition, IFLA has made an infographic containing eight simple steps based on FactCheck.org's article in 2016 entitled How to Spot Fake News, to check the validity of a story. Below are eight ways to identify news:



Figure 1: Infographics Recognizing false information (*How to spot fake news*)
Source: (IFLA 2019)

2.2 Threats to Distortion and Loss of Information

One of the things that threatens access to information is the lack of information itself. In the context of communication, information can be corrupted, distorted or can be lost altogether. Information distortion usually occurs due to lack of enthusiasm to confirm the information received; whereas, loss of information usually occurs due to the inability to maintain the source of the information itself. Information management institutions such as libraries must be sensitive to this kind of issue. Information that is spread nowadays is more of an unstructured information. However, libraries often manage only those physical assets such as books, journals, and other publications.

Very few libraries and other information agencies make efforts to preserve unstructured information. Preservation of structured information is relatively easier when compared to preservation of unstructured knowledge since it is tangible. Preservation of unstructured information, on the other hand, requires preservation of values that are relatively abstract. This challenge must be answered by libraries and other information institutions to ensure that the information needed by users is preserved for future generations.

One threat that has the potential to interfere with efforts to preserve knowledge is the destruction of information because the information is considered harmful or might inflict danger to others (Prabowo 2015). For this reason, preservation efforts in terms of the value of the information must be made effectively. In his study, Prabowo (2015) revealed that special information also needs to be posted specifically because of its specific user niche. In the context of the acquisition of physical information in the form of books and other publications by the government and to become public knowledge there is indeed a legal

umbrella in the form of Law No. 4 of 1990 (Law on Deposit). Unfortunately, the Act still does not produce significant results and needs to be reviewed again.

The risk of damage and distortion of information is a real threat that can come at any time. Preservation of knowledge in this case is an effort to manage risk so that there is no information chaos in the future. *Gethok Tular*, which is based on information sharing activities, creates an opportunity to test the validity of an information. This will ensure that, if information becomes widespread, it will be checked immediately. This is very much related to *endorsement*, where the question is about who the speaker of the information is. It is also a testimony from someone who is considered representative to convey information with persuasive purposes.

Persuasion become successful since there is someone who believed in what he/she heard. Speakers of the information plays a vital role since he or she should be capable of persuading others, getting people to talk about what he or she is saying. If the speaker doesn't have the ability to persuade people or to make others believe what he or she has to say, people tend to check the reliability and credibility of the speaker.

2.3 Preservation of knowledge

Preservation encompasses all managerial and financial considerations including provisions for retention and accommodation, staffing, policies, techniques and methods for preservation of information (Fatmawati 2018). Information will be useful if it meets with the party who really needs it. The effort to find information with those who need it is one way to preserve that information which will be accessible for a long time. For instance, if there is only one who know the information and shared it to others, then the information that was originally known only by one person has now become known to many people. If the information is kept by someone and there was no sharing of transfer of information, the knowledge will be gone especially if this was not documented or shared. The uniqueness of human knowledge combined with the new information acquired will produce new knowledge that might be used to make informed decisions. Storing information by not sharing it with others means is the same as letting the information slowly corrupt and perish.

Given the reasons above, it is very important to have the efforts to preserve unstructured knowledge. It is said that the amount of unstructured information is far greater than the structured information, for example, contained in books, journal articles, and so on. Even in an article there are those who dare to say that information stored in the minds of humans and not yet released (*tacit knowledge*) amounts to around 80% and the remaining 20% is information that has been poured physically (*explicit knowledge*) (Lumbantobing, 2011). If the number is correct, then there is a lot of valuable information that has not been disseminated.

Preservation of knowledge that is *tacit* has a somewhat different meaning to the preservation of knowledge that is *explicit* (Faust, n.d.). The difference is in the treatment of the two types of information. *Explicit* information is preserved using visible technical procedural approaches, while *tacit* information requires a persuasive approach, namely by making other people volunteer to share information they know. Preservation of knowledge that is *tacit* has more emphasis on activities to maintain the existence of such information access. While the preservation of knowledge that is *explicit* emphasis on rescue and treatment of the physical.

2.4 Knowledge Privatization

There are four factors that affect a person's keeping information to other people in an organization. The four factors include hierarchy, organizational context, political reasons, and

suspicion (Friesl, Sackmann, and Kremser 2011). In agreement with Friesl (2011), Riege (2005) explained that there are three factors that need to be a manager's attention when he wants his company to progress and develop. These three factors are motivation, organizational structure, and technology support (Riege 2005). From some of these statements, it can be understood that the information is an asset in an organization and should be managed properly.

The spirit to open information as widely as possible to the public has been widely practiced, one of which is the popular *open access* movement everywhere. If information is supposed to be known to the public but is privatized, then it will cause chaos.

Knowledge privatization might be useful in the context of conventional competition, but in the context of the spirit of fostering innovation, this is a setback. Information is an asset, so information must be utilized to make it more useful. When someone sees information as an asset, he will find opportunities to develop it. In contrast, if someone considers that information is an inanimate object, then he will hoard it. In a developed organization, information privatization is then transformed into open information. This means that the information has become a public domain that can be used by anyone (Joint 2007).

Information privatization often does not occur because information is controlled by individuals. Sometimes, the privatization of information is carried out by organizations where a person producing information works. This often creates tension in the process of sharing knowledge (Rechberg and Syed 2013). Another impact is that in the future, people who are fond of sharing information will then become lazy because they feel that their contribution is not recognized.

Information management institutions such as libraries must play an active role in disseminating information. The library must not only be a passive object which is a storage area. If the library only stops at that function, then the library is no different from the person who stores information only for himself. For this reason, library managers and other information institutions need to communicate the information they provide to its users. Social media is one of the channels that can be used to communicate that information. Librarians and other information professionals need to learn how to communicate information to the public so that knowledge that was originally private can be shared (Purwadi and Irwansyah 2019). One interesting example is in a public library in Botswana where they disseminate health information through interesting programs, in addition to providing information related to it (Ntlotlang and Grand 2016).

3. METHOD

This research is a literature study. There are several steps in library research, such as preparing equipment; compiling a work bibliography that serves as a record of the main source material; setting the time; and reading and making research notes (Khatibah 2011). The authors sorted the materials that are almost the same, provided notes and marks for a month on the parts that the author deemed important. The authors summarized the essence of the indicators that will be sought and then analyze them into a research conclusion. This research was conducted from August to September 2019. Presentation of the data was done descriptively, and data analysis was carried out through a reduction system.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 The Opportunities of *Gethok Tular* or *Word-of-Mouth (WOM)* as a Knowledge Preservation Method

LOCKSS as previously known is the method of preservation of digital knowledge. LOCKSS emphasizes the quantity of multiplication of information as a

form of careful management of information against the threat of damage or loss of information. *Gethok Tular* which means transmitting information to others can be interpreted as an effort to multiply information by embedding that information into the minds of others. The principle of LOCKSS that has been widely carried out both institutionally and privately in securing information is the first opportunity to persuade as a method of preservation of knowledge. Even so, still LOCKSS and *Gethok Tular* have differences. LOCKSS saves information by physically saving it, but is very limited by its *value*.

The next opportunity is *Gethok Tular*'s potential as a medium of digital knowledge preservation through social media. The emergence of the term *viral* is because of the success of spreading the information digitally. Digitally shared information does not reduce the meaning of communication between individuals. There are still two or more individuals who interact socially, while technology in this case is only a tool. The massive development of information technology offers opportunities for information to be spread more broadly than information conveyed by word-of-mouth. Since *Gethok Tular* is a communication method between two or more people, several people can have the chance to validate the information being transmitted. Having *Gethok Tular* as a marketing strategy which aims people to talk about information about products or services through someone's experiences at no cost, it is indeed efficient and effective.

4.2 The Challenges of *Gethok Tular* or Word-of-Mouth (WOM) as a Knowledge Preservation Method

Gethok Tular can also be compared with LOCKSS (*Lots of Copies Keep Stuff Safe*), a digital information source preservation strategy, which means that the more information is duplicated, the more secure it will be (Reich and Rosenthal 2010). Given the same principle of LOCKSS, the more people know this information, the longer the information lasts or preserved. LOCKSS ensures that the duplicated information will be in the exact same form as the original source, while *Gethok Tular* can be shifted, distorted, or even strayed away from the original information.

Privatization and prohibition of knowledge or information should not be ignored. There may be times that the information should not be shared to everyone and must be kept in private for the benefit of some individuals or organizations. There also information that may inflict harm to others when spread publicly. These should also be taken in consideration in knowledge preservation.

Table 1 Opportunities and Challenges of *Getok* Transmission as a Method of Knowledge Preservation

No.	Opportunity	Challenge	The solution
1	Has a character that is almost the same as the LOCKSS concept	Potentially influenced by personal assumptions that may be properly received	Clarifying with <i>ask back</i> with the aim of ensuring that the information was successfully transferred
2	More opportunities to make use of technology	<i>Gethok Tular</i> that is transmitted digitally thru social media is often disturbed by the rise of information whose truth	Applying the principles of media information literacy, such as verifying the source of information

No.	Opportunity	Challenge	The solution
		has not been tested	before disseminating
3	Several people to validate the information	The more disseminated the information, the more prone to information distortion	Applying the principles of media information literacy, such as verifying the source of information before disseminating
4	Effective (proven successful) and efficient (cost effective, even free) communication strategy	Information privatization and information prohibition	Raise awareness that some information is for public consumption and should not be kept private

Source: Results of Data Analysis (2019)

5. CONCLUSION

Gethok Tular or *word-of-mouth (WOM)* as one of the traditional methods of communication is not necessarily abandoned, it even continues to develop and adapt to progress. *Gethok Tular*, which was only done verbally and directly, now can be done digitally. Digital spread of information by using technology such as social media and the widespread of information that becomes *viral* were some of the instances in which *Gethok Tular* is still being recognized.

Gethok Tular contains persuasive narrative that makes people talk about some certain products, services or issues. The spirit of *Gethok Tular* itself is in the term "*tular*", which means to transmit or share. It provides an opportunity to share the information.

The highly fluid and infectious curved nature of this medium is very suitable for marketing in this era. Marketing in this era which is dominated by bombastic narratives is often disappointing. *Gethok Tular* get people to talk about issues based on someone's experiences.

Gethok Tular is said to be one of the methods of preservation of knowledge because it contains the practice of applying the LOCKSS principle. The media and information technology that is growing rapidly also provides convenience to get share and store information. Information sharing activities uses technology based on the spirit of sharing in line with the enthusiasm of getting persuaded.

The challenges of getting persuaded as a method of preservation of knowledge are problems with information distortion, information privatization, and the prohibition or limitation of information.

To minimize information distribution, confirmation efforts should be made. This means that the recipient of information should be careful verifying and validating information before sharing and disseminating it. The absence of confirmation in the process of sharing information will produce counterproductive results, misleading you to facts.

Privatization of information or the disagreement of a party to share information will hamper the ecosystem of information dissemination which has an impact on the inhibition of the process of preservation of knowledge through contagion. To avoid privatization of information, every individual must have the same view regarding information ownership. Information owned by someone if it is beneficial to others should not be kept private.

Prohibition of information should also be taken to consideration. While it is true that there is information that must be shared publicly, there are also information that must be kept private as it will caused damaged or inflict harm to a person or an organization.

6. SUGGESTIONS AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This study certainly has many shortcomings, especially in the concept of *Gethok Tular* or *word-of-mouth (WOM)* as one of the methods of preservation of knowledge. The researcher felt that it is impossible to express comprehensively the concept of *Gethok Tular* as a method of preservation of knowledge. For this reason, the researchers recommended that a further study of this problem be conducted. The researchers are also open for collaborative initiatives and suggestions on the said topic.

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